

MESSAGE OUTLINE

Grace: God is For Us

1. God Loves and Calls Us

September 10, 2023

Romans 1:1–7 (NIV)

¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— ² the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures ³ regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, ⁴ and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. ⁵ Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. ⁶ And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. ⁷ To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

The good news is that God is for us.

If God is for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31

1. God loves us.

To all in Rome who are loved by God

...neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:39 (NIV)

2. God calls us to belong to Jesus, and

You also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ

In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace.

Colossians 1:6 (NIV)

3. God calls us to be his holy people.

loved by God called to be his holy people: Grace and peace to you

Paul: A servant, called to be an apostle, set apart

But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles.

Galatians 1:13-16 (NIV)

The Church in Rome: called to belong to Jesus Christ.

¹ I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon, of the church in Cenchreae. ² I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me. ³ Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. ⁴ They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. ⁵ Greet also the church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia. ⁶ Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you. ⁷ Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

Romans 16:1–7 (NIV)

"Paul's lived theology is about Peace in the empire, and it is a radical alternative to Rome's famous Pax Romana... The theology of Romans is about a way of life, about lived theology. Romans advocates for a *via vitae*, both for the individual and for the community of faith in Rome."

Scot McKnight, *Reading Romans Backwards: A gospel of peace in the midst of empire*

NOTES

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

September 10, 2023

As needed, refer to the Order of Worship and Resources at solanabeach.church for sermon video, message outline, and small group questions print version.

CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

(Before beginning your time in Romans 1:1-7 this week, spend 10 minutes getting acquainted and re-acquainted with one another. Ask: How was your summer? What's been a joy for you? What's been a challenge?)

Read Romans 1:1-7 and Romans 16: 1-7

- **Journal** (5-10 minutes): What do you notice or wonder about the people who Paul is mentioning by name in chapter 16? Use your journal to highlight the big questions you have about the connection between Romans 16 and Romans 1.
- Together: **Pray** for the Holy Spirit to open your heart to the words of Romans and pray for God's love to hold your conversation together even when questions or differences arise.
- **Reflect together** in pairs or as a whole group (10 minutes). Choose 1-2 of the questions below:
 - Do the names/people that Paul greets in Romans 16 hold any special meaning for you? What do their names or stories tell you about the good news of the gospel?
 - What emotions, thoughts or gut feelings come to you as you read Romans 1:6-7?
 - How do Paul's words of grace and peace welcome you today?

CONNECT WITH SCRIPTURE (Read Romans 1:1-7 and the additional Bible verses from the sermon outline. Then select the best questions or customize the questions for your group.)

- Read the main points from the sermon outline.
- What's the good news of Paul's letter to the Romans?
- Who is Paul and what's his story? (Galatians 1:13-16)
- What is the distinction between the way of life in Christ and the way of the Roman Empire?
- What, if any, comparison can you make between our lives today and the lives of the early Christians in Rome?

- What stands out to you the most from the message or the scripture this week?
- Reflecting on the main points of the message, what are the themes you will continue to wrestle with in the coming days?

CONNECT WITH GOD (Do the below practice to end your small group this week, time permitting)

Imaginative Prayer (10 minutes)

Read Romans 1:7 as a way to connect your life with God and with God's love for the world.

Imagine: Breathe deeply and slowly, entering into a different time and place. You are at a table of a house church in Rome. You are hearing Phoebe read Paul's letter to you and those around you.

Pay attention: In this imagined scene, who is with you? What do you see? Feel? Hear?

Silently Read the words below and repeat them over and over again in your minds. Let your whole self be saturated in this good news of grace and peace to you.

"To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

PRAYER

End the imaginative prayer practice by praying for one another and for your neighborhood, for strangers, friends, and the whole world. Pray that God's grace and peace be transformative not only in your life but in the lives of those you meet. Pray that you greet everyone with the grace and peace of God.